

with this and other natural gratifications which the child finds for himself have much to answer for in the way of later difficulties of behaviour and temperament, and a big contribution to mental hygiene would be made if we could persuade mothers and nurses generally not to interfere with thumb-sucking in children, at any rate by severe or forcible methods.

I might usefully add a note here about the allied problem of nail-biting.

I have accumulated a good deal of evidence showing the uselessness of negative methods of dealing with nail-biting, whether these take the form of scoldings, whippings, tying the hands up, putting bitter aloes or mustard on the nails. These methods almost invariably fail, and invariably cause misery and guilt in the child. Lately, however, I have had several cases reported in which nail-biting has been cured, and very easily cured, by treatment of the nails with olive oil.

It is clear that the physical effect on the nails of the olive oil itself must be an important factor. The oil makes the nails smooth and soft, with no jagged edges; the child has therefore less temptation to tear at them and bite the corners off. But it is the psychological value of the jagged corners that is important to the child, and it is the psychological service which the mother renders in putting on olive oil which chiefly helps the child. Nails are bitten because they are "bad" nails, because they want to scratch, because they are like biting teeth; and the more jagged and menacing they become by being bitten, the more they have to be bitten—to punish them and prevent them from scratching and biting other people. When they are softened by olive oil, they become good nails, loving nails, not jagged, dangerous nails, and the mother who puts on the olive oil is the helpful

" good " mother, who turns them from bad nails into good, and thus helps the child not to have bad, scratching impulses. She demonstrates to the child, as it were, the possibility of their being good and loving nails, instead of bad, scratch- ing and biting nails.

3. CLEANLINESS

The problem of training *in* control of bowel and bladder and general cleanliness occupies several years in the child's early life. With jsome children, it is not really settled until three-and-a-half or four, although with others it is solved in